Key Ideas from the
Keys to Quality Accreditation Project

Key Idea This is It! VALIDATION DAY!

By Joyce Ruppell, Keys to Quality Staff

Final tasks of accreditation are: completing your Program Book and preparing for Validation Day. By now you have carefully scrutinized every aspect of your program and, perhaps, made changes to classroom environments, added materials or revised curriculum. Hopefully, you have asked Keys to Quality staff to do a '"walkthrough" of your program and review the program book prior to submitting to NAEYC. How do you demonstrate your accomplishments effectively? What does validation day actually look like? How do you help your staff to relax and enjoy the day?

For the most part, validators try to make everyone in the program feel calm and reassured. I was once told to conduct as normal a day as possible. What's normal? Well, you do not want to do anything that is not familiar to the children and staff. For example, validation day is not a good time to have the Zoomobile come! Keep routines the same. Focus on the children and helping the day to be a quality experience for them just as you do every day!

A key component for the day to go well is to have the administrator be familiar with each part of the process. He/she should be thoroughly acquainted with steps taken throughout the Self-Study.

The more knowledge you have about the process and what is expected, the more confident you will be. It will also help you ask questions or make suggestions if you suspect that the validator may be getting the wrong impression of your program or even making procedural "validator" errors during your visit. It is important to remember that if anything unusual occurs on the part of the validator, it is appropriate for the administrator to call NAEYC to ask about the situation.

Have all pertinent materials ready in a quiet space hopefully removed from the action of the classrooms or administrative area, but not so far that the validator feels isolated. All ECCOs and Staff and Family Questionnaires should be ready along with your other required documents. We recommend an organizational tool such as a file box exclusively for accreditation materials.

When the trained validator arrives at your program, be sure to conduct her/him on a tour to can get oriented. Each classroom observed will be visited for 45-60 minutes. The validator will use the ECCO form to record observations. After the observation, or when the teacher has a break, the validator may need to ask the teacher a few questions about topics not possible to observe on that day. Space and time in your

schedule should be made available for this to occur. After completing observations, the validator will begin verifying Staff and Family Questionnaires.

This will require access to children's and staff files. In situations where confidentiality must be maintained, an affidavit must be obtained confirming that these documents are in place. The validator will review a sampling of documents and make sure the count is correct. The validator will record observations in your Program Book that you sent in to NAEYC (which the validator will bring the day of the visit). When all the necessary tasks are completed, it will be time to meet together for the Exit Interview... a topic of another one of our "Key Ideas."

For more infomation, contact the Keys to Quality Project by contacting RI Department of Education, Preschool Grant Coordinator, 401/222-4600 x 2408. E-mail: abcohen@ride.ri.net or CHILDSPAN at 401/729-0765, e-mai1: RICCTS@intap.net